

Redefining the Role and Expanding the Functions of News Anchors in the Era of Converged Media

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ABSTRACT

The era of converged media has injected powerful momentum into news dissemination. Technological innovation and media convergence are reshaping the communication ecosystem, propelling news anchors toward a pivotal opportunity for role and functional upgrades. This paper systematically explores the reconstruction pathways for anchors in three dimensions-role positioning, competency development, and audience engagement-based on the positive characteristics and theoretical underpinnings of converged media. It analyzes the expansion of anchors' functions across information delivery, resource integration, and social connectivity. By showcasing how anchor communities proactively adapt to change and fulfill social responsibilities, this study elucidates the value of converged media journalism in driving social progress and fostering positive energy. It provides insights for building a new-era anchor workforce and advancing high-quality development within the industry.

KEYWORDS

The era of converged media; News anchor; Role reconstruction; Functional expansion

1 Introduction

The advent of the converged media era, driven by technological innovation and deep integration of media platforms, has profoundly reshaped the landscape and ecosystem of news dissemination. Against this backdrop, the role and functions of news anchors are undergoing unprecedented transformation and expansion. The traditional image of a broadcaster centered on one-way information transmission is gradually being replaced by a new type of communicator who operates across platforms, possesses multiple skills, and emphasizes strong interactivity.

This paper systematically explores the reconstruction pathways for news anchors across three dimensions-role positioning, competency structure, and audience relations-based on the core characteristics of integrated media journalism such as immediacy, interactivity, and comprehensive coverage, as well as theoretical frameworks including gatekeeping, use and gratification, and media convergence. It further analyzes the functional expansion of news anchors in information filtering and interpretation, cross-sector resource integration, emotional connection, and consensus building. By examining the practices and innovations of news anchors in adapting to contemporary transformations and fulfilling their social responsibilities, this study aims to demonstrate the vital role of news communication in fostering positive social energy and advancing societal progress within the converged media landscape. It further seeks to provide insights for strengthening the news anchor workforce and promoting high-quality development in the journalism industry.

2 Core characteristics of news communication in the converged media era and theoretical foundations of the anchor role

2.1 Core characteristics of news communication in the converged media era

Converged media relies on technological innovation to drive the deep integration of traditional and new media, presenting entirely new characteristics in terms of communication platforms, content production, and interactive methods. This has laid a solid foundation for enhancing the effectiveness of news dissemination.

Communication channels have achieved "omni-media coverage," forming a multi-dimensional matrix encompassing television, radio, newspapers, websites, short videos, and live streaming. 5G and mobile internet technologies have broken through the constraints of time and space. Audiences can access information and participate in discussions through multiple channels such as television, short videos on mobile phones, and live streaming. This multi-channel coverage enables news to reach a broader audience, effectively achieving "news service without blind spots" and driving the penetration of information throughout society.

The timeliness of information dissemination has undergone an "instant upgrade." Technologies like big data and artificial intelligence have simplified information processing workflows. Broadcasters can now use mobile devices to transmit live footage in real time and leverage new media platforms to release authoritative information at the earliest

opportunity. For instance, during major disasters or accidents, anchors can provide real-time updates on rescue operations, relaying the efforts of government and society. This helps alleviate public anxiety, unites social forces, and demonstrates the positive role of news in emergency response.

Interactive communication has achieved "deep empowerment," transforming audiences from passive recipients into active participants. Features like comments, bullet chats, and likes on new media platforms have built bridges for direct communication. Topics initiated by anchors turn audiences into co-creators of news, forming a virtuous cycle of "communication-interaction-re-communication." This enhances the warmth and vitality of news dissemination.

2.2 The theoretical basis of the news anchor role

The construction and evolution of the news anchor role has always been underpinned by classic theories from communication studies and journalism. In the era of converged media, these theories provide the logical foundation for reconstructing the role while also charting the course for expanding its functions.

The Gatekeeper Theory serves as the core theoretical foundation for the role of news anchors. Proposed by Kurt Lewin, this theory posits that within the process of information dissemination, gatekeepers exist who are responsible for screening and filtering information, as well as determining its direction and scope of transmission. In the era of traditional media, news anchors, editors, and reporters collectively bore this responsibility to ensure the authenticity, accuracy, and directionality of disseminated content. In the era of converged media, faced with information overload and the proliferation of false information, the anchor's role as gatekeeper has become even more critical. They must sift through high-quality information, interpret complex data, and help audiences discern the truth from falsehood, serving as both a "filter" and a "navigator" between audiences and information.

The "Usage and Fit" theory provides a foundation for reconstructing the relationship between news anchors and their audiences. This theory emphasizes the active role of audiences in the communication process, positing that audiences select media and content based on their own needs. In the era of converged media, audience demands have become increasingly diverse. Beyond obtaining information, they also seek emotional resonance, social interaction, and more. News anchors can use audience needs as a guide, leveraging interactive communication and emotional expression to align with diverse demands and build stable audience connections.

The theory of "media convergence" provides a macro-level framework for the transformation of news anchors' roles and functions. This theory posits that media convergence arises from the combined effects of technological advancement and market demand, with its core objective being to break down media boundaries, integrate resources, and achieve complementary advantages. Against this backdrop, news anchors must adapt to the demands of cross-media communication, develop the ability to present content across multiple platforms, and serve as a "bridge" connecting different media formats to maximize the value of news dissemination.

3 The reconstruction of news anchor roles in the era of converged media

In the wave of the converged media era, news anchors are proactively breaking through the limitations of their traditional roles. Through comprehensive restructuring across positioning, capabilities, and relationships, they have enhanced their professional competitiveness and emerged as a key driving force for innovation and progress in journalism and communication. This has fostered a positive and promising trajectory for their career development.

3.1 Role positioning reconstruction: breaking media boundaries to achieve cross-platform adaptability

In the era of traditional media, the role of news anchors was often tied to specific platforms, such as "television anchors" or "radio anchors," with relatively fixed reach and audiences. In the era of converged media, the role of anchors has undergone a transformative upgrade, evolving into "omni-media anchors" capable of delivering value across multiple platforms. By adapting to cross-platform formats, they expand the reach and influence of news dissemination.

For example, in the era of converged media, leveraging the innovative IP "Anchor Speaks on the News," the anchors of the News Broadcast have achieved a "boundary-breaking upgrade" in their role positioning. Transitioning from a single-platform "television political news anchor" to a multi-platform "omnichannel anchor," we adapt content across platforms to deliver political news and mainstream perspectives to broader audiences, ensuring authoritative information reaches every corner without blind spots.

The restructuring of anchor positioning is first reflected in their adaptability to the platform through "specialization with multiple skills." On television, anchors like Kang Hui and Li Zimeng consistently maintain a dignified and professional delivery style, accurately conveying national policies, upholding the credibility of mainstream media, and preserving the authoritative image of the "News Broadcast."

On short-video platforms, hosts shed their serious personas to become political science communicators and public welfare advisors. They align with the concise, straightforward, and easy-to-understand nature of short videos, adjusting

their tone and format to make policy explanations more approachable and engaging. This shift does not negate traditional roles, but rather enhances communication effectiveness by adapting to diverse platforms while upholding core values of authority. Anchors have become the "ballast" of mainstream public opinion while conveying positive energy through younger, more relatable expressions. They have truly built an all-media bridge that connects diverse groups and amplifies the voice of the times.

3.2 Redefining role competencies: strengthening integrated skills in "content creation, editing, broadcasting, and analysis + technology"

In the era of traditional media, the core competency of news anchors centered on the "delivery" aspect. In the era of converged media, the composite competency of "reporting, editing, broadcasting, and commentary plus technology" has become its core competitive advantage. Faced with the diverse demands of multi-platform content production, broadcasters must push beyond their existing capabilities to transition from "single-skill specialists" to "multi-talented professionals," thereby laying a solid foundation for high-quality news dissemination.

Throughout the entire process of "gathering, editing, broadcasting, and analyzing," anchors no longer rely solely on edited scripts but actively engage in news production: Conduct on-site interviews to gather firsthand materials, participate in content creation and refinement to optimize expression, ensuring information delivery aligns with audience understanding; In the "evaluation" segment, it transcends the limitations of simple commentary by conducting in-depth analysis that integrates policy contexts with social realities, delivering valuable insights to the audience. For instance, when covering the "development of the new energy vehicle industry," anchors not only report industry data but also connect it to dimensions such as national regulations and shifts in consumer demand. They interpret the industry's growth prospects, guiding audiences to rationally assess sector trends and making news commentary more instructive.

Furthermore, as a news anchor, one must learn to employ diverse communication methods to present television news. In other words, television news anchors must not only possess the fundamental professional skills required of television journalists, but also proactively master the application methods of new media platforms in the context of media convergence. By leveraging new media platforms and tools to engage with audiences, they can enhance viewer loyalty to television news programming ^[1]. Technical literacy has become the core competency for news anchors in the era of converged media. Broadcasters must master multi-dimensional technical skills: including basic operations such as debugging live streaming equipment and optimizing audio-visual effects; proficiently operating new media platforms to complete content publishing, data analysis, and fan engagement; and possessing short video editing capabilities to enrich news presentation formats, enhance content vividness, and improve dissemination efficiency. This transformation has significantly enhanced the anchor's leading role in content production, boosting the media's reach, credibility, and influence. It showcases the comprehensive capabilities and new image of news anchors in the converged media environment.

3.3 Reconstructing role relationships: shifting audience engagement from "one-way output" to "two-way interaction"

In the era of traditional media, television outlets placed excessive emphasis on the concept of "transmission," with news anchors solely responsible for accurately conveying scripted content to audiences who passively received information. In the era of converged media, the development of mobile short videos has expanded the forms of news dissemination, and news programs have begun to incorporate interactivity. The rise of media-as-everything has elevated the status of users, with the "user-first" philosophy taking root in people's minds. News media have begun establishing diverse interactive channels for users, ensuring audience needs are increasingly recognized and met ^[2]. The agency of audiences is becoming increasingly evident, and the model of news communication is gradually shifting from the previous one-way transmission to two-way interaction. By reshaping their relationship with audiences, anchors are building bridges of deep emotional connection, primarily manifested in two key aspects:

First, the "real-time interactive" communication model. Broadcasters leverage the diverse interactive channels of new media platforms to build real-time responsive information dialogue networks. During live streams, hosts capture audience questions through real-time comments and provide instant answers using live-streaming technology. After short videos are published, they engage with viewers by responding to each comment individually, creating an interactive space and incorporating audience suggestions into a content optimization loop. This dynamic feedback mechanism breaks the one-way nature of traditional news dissemination, transforming policy interpretation and event analysis from static output into two-way dialogue. It helps audiences deepen their understanding and identification with public affairs through active participation.

Second, the emotional connection method of "empathy and resonance" sees anchors evolve from mere information conveyors into hubs of social sentiment. By focusing on hot topics concerning people's livelihoods, they build emotional resonance. Through a documentary lens, they portray the life trajectories and spiritual outlook of ordinary individuals,

amplifying personal value with visual storytelling. They immerse themselves among the masses to gather authentic voices, weaving grassroots perspectives into their reporting to infuse news pieces with the warmth of humanistic care. This narrative approach elevates news beyond mere information dissemination, transforming it into a medium that carries collective emotions. By conveying positive energy, it enhances social cohesion and fosters an uplifting, virtuous public discourse environment.

4 Expanding the role of news anchors in the era of converged media

With the evolution of their roles, news anchors have seen their functions significantly expanded. Moving beyond mere information delivery, they now engage in information filtering and interpretation, cross-sector resource integration, and emotional and social connection. This diversification enriches the content and formats of news dissemination, playing a pivotal role in serving society and fostering positive energy. It demonstrates the social responsibility and contemporary value of news media.

4.1 Information function expansion: from "transmission" to "filtering, interpretation, and deep aggregation"

In the era of converged media characterized by an explosion of information, audiences face numerous challenges such as "information overload" and "difficulty distinguishing truth from falsehood." Consequently, the role of news anchors has evolved from merely "delivering information" to that of "information curators," "interpreters," and "aggregators." They assist the public in efficiently accessing valuable and trustworthy content, thereby enhancing the quality of information dissemination.

As gatekeepers of information, broadcasters rely on their professional expertise and authoritative sources to fulfill their duty of separating truth from falsehood. Through rigorous verification and screening, they deliver authentic and accurate news, thereby fostering a reliable information environment. During the pandemic, live streamers promptly incorporated official sources to clarify misinformation and disseminate scientific policies, playing a crucial role in curbing rumors and guiding the public toward rational understanding.

As interpreters of information, anchors translate specialized content into accessible language, using case studies and analogies to lower the cognitive barrier. For instance, when analyzing the "Government Work Report," they connect terms like "GDP growth targets" and "public welfare expenditures" to people's daily lives-issues such as income, education, and healthcare-making policy information more relevant to public needs.

As information aggregators, anchors synthesize diverse content around specific themes to deliver systematic services. For societal hotspots or major events, they compile materials from multiple sources into series reports or special features, helping audiences grasp the full picture. For instance, during the college entrance exam period, they integrate policy interpretations and application guides into one-stop service features, providing convenience for students and parents.

News anchors enhance the relevance, comprehensibility, and systematic nature of information dissemination through their work of filtering, interpreting, and aggregating content. In complex information environments, they construct clear and reliable information channels for the public.

4.2 Expanding collaborative capabilities: from "independent communication" to "cross-boundary resource integration and practical empowerment"

In the era of traditional media, news anchors' communication was largely confined within media organizations, exhibiting characteristics of "independent dissemination." In the era of converged media, greater emphasis is placed on resource integration and collaborative partnerships. The role of anchors must evolve from "independent dissemination" to encompass "cross-sector resource integration and practical empowerment" to enhance communication impact and social value.

In cross-sector resource integration, live streamers can collaborate with governments, enterprises, social organizations, experts, and the public to build a "communication community," leveraging their capabilities in resource coordination and platform development. For instance, in coverage of the "rural revitalization" theme, anchors collaborate with agricultural authorities to obtain policy information, leverage corporate resources, and invite rural leaders to share experiences. Through approaches such as "live-streaming to aid agriculture + thematic reporting + online-offline integration," they consolidate content and channels to both communicate policies and outcomes while helping farmers expand sales and resolve production challenges. This demonstrates the anchor's pivotal role in resource aggregation and cross-domain collaboration.

From the perspective of empowering practice, anchors are evolving from "information disseminators" to "action catalysts," driving the transformation of news communication from mere information transmission to practical problem-solving. For instance, to address the challenge of "employment difficulties," live streamers can collaborate with companies

to organize online job fairs and establish employment information platforms. This approach bridges the gap between job seekers and employers, providing efficient employment support. Such practices effectively extend the functions of journalism, enhance the constructive and service-oriented nature of communication, significantly elevate the social value of journalistic actions, and fully demonstrate the vital role of news anchors as social connectors and action catalysts in the era of converged media.

4.3 Social function expansion: from "no interaction" to "emotional resonance"

In the era of traditional media, news anchors primarily relied on television to deliver one-way information broadcasts, focusing on authoritative information dissemination and ensuring precise, error-free transmission. An invisible "screen barrier" existed between them and their audience, resulting in relatively weak interactivity. However, as the era of integrated media continues to advance, this landscape has undergone profound and positive transformation. News anchors have evolved from distant observers to companions who connect deeply with audiences, achieving a "resonance effect" that shifts from minimal interaction to emotional resonance.

This transformation has been made possible through diverse and unimpeded channels of interaction. Streamers leverage platforms like Weibo, Douyin, and WeChat to transcend the constraints of time and space, establishing direct and immediate connections. Through live streaming interactions, comment responses, and topic discussions, we listen to and address the public's concerns. This "zero-distance" communication tangibly enhances audience engagement and respect, laying a solid foundation for emotional connection.

Emotional resonance has become the core value of social functions. Broadcasters are not merely conduits for information; they are also the perceivers and channellers of social sentiment. Streamers have become allies who "speak for us" and "express our hearts," authentically conveying the thoughts and feelings of their audience. They serve as channels for voicing concerns and providing feedback within the grassroots discourse arena. Building on emotional connections and mutual trust, they have evolved into bridges linking mainstream discourse with grassroots voices^[3]. They forge emotional connections with their audience by sharing feelings, telling stories, and expressing empathy. When covering uplifting events, their incisive commentary inspires society's inclination toward goodness; in the face of disasters, their sincere concern unites consensus and conveys hope. This two-way interaction rooted in emotions and values significantly enhances the warmth and effectiveness of news communication.

In the era of converged media, the expansion of social functions for anchors has elevated communication from one-way dissemination to two-way emotional exchange and co-creation of value. By fostering emotional resonance, anchors become disseminators of positive energy, unifiers of shared values, and promoters of warmth in our era, making significant contributions to cultivating a clear, harmonious, and trustworthy online environment.

5 Conclusions

In the era of converged media, the landscape of communication has been reshaped, imposing new demands on the role and functions of news anchors. In terms of role reconstruction, anchors must break down barriers between media platforms, leveraging "cross-platform adaptability" to elevate their positioning. They must also strengthen their composite competencies in "reporting, editing, broadcasting, commentary, and technology" to enhance their overall capabilities. Furthermore, they should build "two-way interactive" relationships with audiences to increase connection stickiness. In terms of functional expansion, hosts must evolve from "information conveyors" into "curators, interpreters, and aggregators" to enhance the value of information. They should transition from "independent disseminators" to "cross-sector resource integrators and practice enablers" to amplify the impact of communication. Furthermore, they must shift from "non-interactive figures" to "emotional resonance creators" to deepen emotional connections.

In the future, as technology and the media landscape continue to evolve, the role and functions of news anchors will also undergo constant development. However, the core logic of "audience-centeredness" and the fundamental requirements of "professional competence" and "social responsibility" remain unchanged. Only by continuously adapting to the demands of the times and enhancing their capabilities can broadcasters unlock greater value in integrated media communication, thereby playing a pivotal role in conveying positive energy and guiding public discourse.

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